



The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a significant and historic opportunity for states to collectively develop and adopt a core set of academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. Forty-six states and three territories have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The initiative is being jointly led by the NGA Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. It builds directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college- and career-ready standards and ensures these standards are evidence- and research-based and internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries.

#### **Why is this initiative important?**

Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students in each state are learning to different levels. All students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. If all 49 states and territories adopt the common core state standards, this initiative will affect 43.5 million students which is about 87 percent of the student population (Source: SchoolDataDirect.org; 2007).

#### **Why is a common core of state standards good for students?**

These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers and to be prepared to compete globally. Additionally, expectations for students will be consistent across all states and territories; this consistency will support students transitioning between states. Also, clearer standards will help students better understand what is expected of them and allow for more self-directed learning.

#### **Why is a common core of state standards good for parents?**

A common core of state standards will help parents understand what is expected of students and for college and work success. This understanding of what is expected of students will provide parents the opportunities to meaningfully engage in their children's education.

#### **Why is a common core of state standards good for educators?**

A common core of state standards will allow for more focused pre-service and professional development. Additionally, a common core will help assure that what is taught is aligned with assessments including formative, summative, and benchmarking. Also, educators will have the opportunity to tailor curriculum and teaching methods and promote the sharing of best practices.

#### **Why is a common core of state standards good for states?**

A common core of state standards will clearly articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students. Shared standards will also help states better evaluate policy changes and identify best practices and needs for students and educators.

#### **What is being produced and when?**

A common core of state standards in mathematics and English language arts is currently being produced. In July 2009, the draft college and career ready expectations will be released. Additionally, in December 2009, the draft standards for grades K-12 will be released.

**What does the process look like?**

One of the first official steps in the Common Core State Standards Initiative was for CCSSO and the NGA Center to form a National Policy Forum which met initially in January 2009. This forum is intended as a way to establish a shared understanding of the scope and elements of the common core state standards initiative and coordinate implementation and adoption.

The Standards Development Work Group is currently engaged in determining and writing the college and career readiness standards in mathematics and English language arts. This group is composed of content experts from Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. The Work Group's deliberations will be confidential throughout the process. States and national education organizations will have an opportunity to review and provide evidence-based feedback on the draft documents throughout the process.

Also, as a step in the standards development process, CCSSO and the NGA Center are overseeing the work of a Feedback Group. The role of this Feedback Group is to provide information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.

The final step in the development of these standards is the creation of an expert Validation Committee comprised of national and international experts on standards and in the content areas. This group will review the process and substance of the common core state standards to ensure they are research and evidence-based and will validate state adoption of the common core standards. Members of the committee will be nominated by governors and chiefs of the participating states and selected by a group of four governors and four chiefs.

**What will the common core standards look like?**

The common core state standards will be fewer, clearer, and higher. They will articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for what students will know and be able to do grade by grade and when they graduate from high school. The standards will be internationally benchmarked, evidence- and research-based, and ready for states to adopt.

**What happens after the common core standards are developed?**

Adoption of the common core state standards is voluntary for states; states choosing to align their standards to the common core state standards have agreed the common core will represent at least 85 percent of the state's standards in mathematics and English language arts. Additionally, there is an obvious role for assessment; some states will voluntarily come together to develop new, innovative, common assessments.

**What happens after states adopt common core standards?**

The common core state standards are the first step in transforming our education system. For systemic change to occur educators must be supported (e.g., time, resources, professional development) in changing classroom practice based on the standards. Instructional materials and assessments that align to the standards and measure and support student progress will need to be developed.

**How can my organization get involved?**

- Visit the Common Core State Standards Web site page to learn more: [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org) or [http://www.ccsso.org/federal\\_programs/13286.cfm](http://www.ccsso.org/federal_programs/13286.cfm)
- Subscribe to Common Core State Standards updates at [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org) or the NGA newsletter at [join-nganews@talk.nga.org](mailto:join-nganews@talk.nga.org)
- Write a statement of support for the initiative and send it to [communications@ccsso.org](mailto:communications@ccsso.org) and [webmaster@nga.org](mailto:webmaster@nga.org)